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ABSTRACT

Academic debate may be regarded as an educational game since it includes the adversary quest for favorable decisions from a neutral judge within an artificial context defined by myriad rules and traditions. In academic debate, the requisite fairness is provided by such game rules as time limitations, speaker order, uniform resolutions, critic neutrality, and rules or traditions regarding evidence integrity. While the rules of most educational games provide no variation or uncertainty in determining the outcome, debate is a unique game because winning is determined by rules that are brought into practical application by the critic. These rules have produced critics whose stances no longer require or reward the demonstration of superior debate skills, whose decision options are unrealistic, and who are theoretically bound to ignore the real means and ends of oral advocacy. These results in turn inhibit the educational fairness functions they were designed to fulfill. Changes in debate judging might include (1) a modified critical stance that would operate on the assumption of critic neutrality concerning the area of dispute and opposing advocates while requiring an active critical evaluation of the arguments presented, (2) the use of presumption that assures quality in each argumentative component prior to its acceptance as a relevant factor in the final decisions that are reached, and (3) modified debate ballots to allow the critic the option of remaining undecided on the issues in controversy when that is how the critic perceives the arguments. (HOD)

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Debate as Game, Educational Tool, and Argument:

An Evaluation of Theory and Rules

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Debate as Game, Educational Tool, and Argument:

An Evaluation of Theory and Rules

In conceptualizing debate as an educational game Charles Willard concluded that "academic debate is a 'game' in the most rigorous sense of that term."[1] His rationale for this conclusion included the observed adversary quest for favorable decision outcomes from a neutral judge within an artificial context defined by a myriad of rules and traditions. These rules and traditions purportedly exist to maximize the educational value of the game, which Willard aptly described as the teaching of research, rhetorical criticism, resource evaluation, issue analysis, and oral delivery skills.

While none of these points are objectionable, I find Willard guilty of an error of omission in failing to consider the traditional function of rules in games qua games. Debate's rules may well function to protect the value of academic debate as an educational tool, but we must not ignore the rules which function so as to preserve debate as a game. If we are to accept the game analogy we would be negligent not to consider all of the ramifications of our decision.

The traditional function of game rules is to provide the fairness that players demand and to define acts of "cheating" that are so antithetical to the process or goals of the game that the normal means of determining a "winner" become meaningless. This fairness function also requires the formulation of a decision rule to define the proper course of action once "cheating" has been detected.

In academic debate the fairness function is performed by such rules as time limitations, speaker order, uniform resolutions, critic neutrality, and rules or

traditions regarding evidence integrity. Many of these rules also serve to enhance the educational value of debate, but their complementary function as game rules must not be ignored. These two functions of rules--fairness and protection of the educational value of the game--shall be central considerations in my analysis.

The rules of most educational games provide no variation or uncertainty in determining the outcome. The chess player wins by checkmating his/her opponent, the Scrabble player by accumulating the greatest number of points, and the crossword whiz by duplicating the puzzle maker's solution. These winning outcomes themselves are attained by adhering to strict and detailed rules.

Debate is a unique game because winning is determined by "rules which are brought into practical application by the critic."[2] Since critics determine which "moves" or strategies are rewarded by wins and which are punished by losses, astute debaters naturally adhere to those strategies which prove to be rewarding. From this projected utilitarian reasoning I, and many other critics of contemporary debate practices, have concluded that critics are to be blamed for allowing or perpetuating any of the harmful developments and trends in debate practices.[3]

Unlike most other critics of fast delivery in debate, the abuse of hypothetical or conditional arguments, or any other practice, my suggestions are based on the assumption that we now have too many harmful rules. I am convinced that the enforcement of a priori rules always has been and always will be inimical to argument as method, to debate as an educational tool, and to debate as a game.[4] I contend that current conceptualizations of the critic's stance, rules of presumption, and the forced yes-no decision have proven to be unnecessary and very harmful normative standards. The use of these concepts as a priori rules has actually encouraged rather than checked the frequently discussed, though prematurely mourned, destruction of debate.

By overemphasizing one of the functions at the expense of the other or by

applying dubious analysis to both functions, current theories and rules have not fulfilled either function. I have concluded that existing rules instead have produced critics whose stances no longer require nor reward the demonstration of superior debate skills, whose decision options are unrealistic, and who are theoretically bound to ignore the real means and ends of oral advocacy. These results in turn inhibit both the educational and fairness functions they were designed to fulfill.

The Critical Stance

Recent attempts to objectify critics' decisions appear to have been utterly misguided. Because they confuse the evils of partisan decisions with the application of critics' expertise, these theories have forced critics to behave as passive receptacles of arguments.[5] In so doing, the training and expertise of forensics educators have been tragically wasted. This application of an a priori rule has perpetuated the frequently lamentable abuse of the "spread" strategy. By overemphasis on fairness and confusion in defining the educational function of debate, this tabula rasa approach fails to fulfill either function.

The tabula rasa approach demands that the critic accept all arguments that have been presented until they have been refuted. Adherents to this philosophy apparently believe that individual differences in critic perceptions of validity would make active critic evaluation no more than an exercise in arbitrary decision making. The prescribed adherence to unrefuted arguments is, in a very limited sense, fair in the game tradition but it does nothing to insure that those who argue well will be rewarded. This rule forces critics to reward those who give scant attention to the core issues of a controversy in order to refute disadvantage eleven which laughably links global nuclear holocaust to reductions in television violence, dissolution of newspaper monopolies, or anti-smoking public service announcements.

This standard becomes inimical to debate as an educational tool when those who attempt to exhibit superior argumentation and communication skills are beaten by a "monster spread" that is intended to force them to "drop DA's seven and eight." Quantity supplants quality when the passive receptacle is subjected to huge numbers of poorly developed arguments intended only to reduce the opposing team into drooling, breath-gulping, jargon-slingers incapable of responding to all of the presumptively valid components of the "spread."[6] How can a critic encourage good arguments by rewarding silly assertions merely because their quantity precludes the opposing team's responding to them all? A plethora of ludicrous and deliberately confusing one-line objections is at least as likely to receive rewards as the highest quality arguments.

The tabula rasa philosophy fails to respect argument as method and succeeds only in sacrificing learning on the altar of the mythical "total objectivity." I suggest that the fairness function of rules can be better met if we admit that total objectivity cannot be achieved or enforced by rules and also make a clear distinction between partisanship and neutral expertise. Since rules can never stop the determined partisan critic, no a priori critical stance can be justified on the grounds that it can supply us with neutral and objective critics.

The assumptions and practices of the tabula rasa philosophy are internally inconsistent. The judge is told to shed his/her expertise and critical consumption of arguments as they are presented and to passively accept what is heard until it is refuted. This philosophy holds that we cannot trust judges to be fair when they hear arguments, yet requires us to turn a blind eye to the fact that we must inevitably trust the same judges' expertise and neutrality when they evaluate the responses and extensions of these same arguments. The contradiction is clear--we either rely on the expertise and neutrality of critics or we do not--we cannot have it both ways. Since rules cannot enforce fairness or produce competence, we lose nothing by assuming that critics can be trusted.

I don't think it would be too radical to suggest that a modified critical stance could operate on the assumption of critic neutrality on the area of dispute and toward the opposing advocates while requiring an active critical evaluation of the arguments presented. This critical stance asks the judge to assume a position of ideological neutrality toward the issues in controversy and toward the opposing teams. I do not ask judges to behave as passive receptacles of ideas, but instead propose that they take the skeptical stance appropriate to their expertise and training in the fields of argumentation and communication. These stances will serve to bind judges, on the honor system, to the fairness required by game players without destroying the educational value of the game.

That neutrality toward the antagonists provides fairness without detriment to the educational value of debate seems to require no support. I believe that most educators already subscribe to this position.[7] The issue of ideological neutrality may require some support. It seems self-evident that ideological (moral, political, theological) neutrality is fair to game players. The proposition requiring proof is that ideological neutrality enhances the educational value of debate.

It might be argued that the omnipresence of ideological bias in the world requires us to teach debaters how to play upon or overcome our existing biases. Besides prohibiting fairness, this argument fails to make an educationally relevant distinction between the product known as attitude change and the process we have labelled as quality argumentation.

The distinction which must be made is that attitude change--a product--is frequently unrelated to good argumentation--a process. Since we are presumably teaching competitors to argue well, it is not useful to make attitude change and ideological bias part of our decisions. Attitude change is so frequently unrelated to the quality of arguments that the former cannot be an educationally useful means of evaluating the latter. As Weaver once wrote: "If people were changed in their attitudes by being made to grasp the lines of an argument, the world might be

a very different place, and we would no longer doubt whether or not man is a rational animal."[8]

The presentation of acceptable rationale for belief is the end sought by all arguers and is therefore the only true standard of excellence in argument. When critic/audience biases are introduced, so are factors unrelated to this standard of excellence. An auditor's biases may be rationally unjustified in his/her own mind, but if that attitude serves an irreplaceable function of ego protection or identity maintenance it will not budge at the demands of even the most compelling arguments.[9] The best arguments in favor of abortion, euthanasia, anarchy, communism, or atheism will never change the attitudes of most people for reasons that do not reflect on the quality of the conflicting arguments.

A decision to include biases as a relevant decision criteria contradicts the assumption that argument is a method for discovering some form or degree of truth out of uncertainty. This decision introduces a priori truth into a realm which assumes that such truth does not exist. Thus ideological neutrality appears to be fair, to have educational value, and to be consistent with argument as method.

I also propose that the ideologically and personally neutral critic should cease to pose as a passive receptacle and should instead apply his/her expertise in a constant and active evaluation of the arguments presented. S/he should apply expert standards of argument quality and validity as a filter through which all incoming arguments must be screened prior to acceptance. Expertise should be used, in a non-partisan fashion, as an active and highly selective cognitive filter that informs the critic not to accept any argument that blatantly violates any fairly universal standard of validity/adequacy or clarity of communication. The critic must never be neutralized in his/her application of expert evaluation.

This active evaluation begins at another point of assumed neutrality--a point that might accurately be labelled as the absence of belief. The active evaluation process introduces rigor and "quality control" by requiring the judge to withhold

belief until such time as belief is warranted by the communication of arguments of sufficiently high quality. The granting of belief is the "acid test" of argument and is the only true measure of its quality. Requiring arguments to satisfy an expert in their use can only improve the quality of debate argumentation.[10]

This active evaluation again requires us to trust critics, in this case to consider only those aspects of arguments that should legitimately inhibit belief. This trust requires only that we trust our own expertise and fairness. Those not willing to grant this amount of trust can never offer us any solution, because an admission that we are not fair experts precludes any hope that debate can ever be fair or have any educational benefits at all. Unless we fear that individual critics' differences in philosophy will result in somewhat arbitrary decisions, we can feel certain that this stance fulfills both functions of debate rules.

This last concern can be mitigated by the realization that both teams face the same idiosyncrasies in any debate. Although this seems fair enough to me, I offer two solutions to those who still doubt. The distribution of judging philosophies can serve to provide both teams with roughly equal knowledge of the critic they face in any given debate. Critics could also be required to inform debaters of the inadequacies they have perceived in crucial arguments. If such feedback is provided prior to the rebuttals there would be little chance of blaming the critic for unresolved inadequacies.

This last solution seems to offer the additional advantage of providing an expanded role for expertise in refining the skills of debaters. Rather than sacrificing one for the other I believe that this critical stance and its accompanying modifications will prove to be adequately fair. The clearer definitional analysis of this approach makes it superior to the confusing morass which spawned the tabula rasa stance. The educational value of debate can only increase if we recall that we are not teaching people how to argue for what Perelman called "a public of ignoramuses."[11]

The Nature of Presumption

Archbishop Whately inadvertently performed a profound disservice to forensics when he discovered a presumption favoring the preoccupant of argumentative ground. While I also disagree with the rationale for his discovery of presumption and the burden of proof, contemporary theorists have magnified his error by continuing to assign and discover presumption and thus made it possible to discover that the real error is to discover or assign them at all. When presumption is assigned on the basis of preoccupation, risk of change, inertia, or an analogy to science, the same error always emerges in the act of assignation itself.[12] Assignment can only be done a priori without the benefit of argument and thus will arbitrarily impose field invariant assumptions about the audience's theoretical options and the nature of the resolution. The situational variability of both audience options and resolutions can never be accounted for in any a priori assignment of presumption.[13]

Since all assignments of presumption are inherently outside of argument itself, they must ignore the goal of argument as method--the creation of belief. Existing notions of presumption are too frequently justified as serving many other purposes. Presumption may tell us who should initiate a controversy, when a response is necessary, and even what we should do in situations in which disputants have all failed to create belief due to the exceptionally good or bad performances on both sides of a controversy. These purposes can only be fulfilled if we first make some of the field invariant a priori assumptions denigrated earlier.

Existing formulations of presumption provide little more than procedural minutiae, with presumption serving as a pre-facto requirement and a post-facto rule for decision making in the absence of belief. If presumption disappears after the presentation of a prima facie case and only reappears in the unlikely event of a tie debate, it can only play a limited role in providing rigor in argumentation.

Perhaps these procedural rules alone justify the various assigned presumptions. I think not. The question of who should initiate a controversy is a moot one in

reality because the fact remains that people continually do initiate controversies. Why they do so is not relevant to academic debate and extraneous to this particular inquiry, although it is probably an important question for theoreticians. Whether one party or the other should begin is trivial--in academic debate we might just as well assign one side to begin and forget the issue. In academic debates involving broad resolutions calling for policy changes I see practical advantages to the traditional affirmative opening, advantages not true under different conditions.

Presumption has also been used to define the initiator's burden of presenting a prima facie case before the respondent must refute his/her case. The real question is whether or not an assigned presumption serves this purpose any better than a more sound conceptualization. Existing notions of presumption only define this burden serendipitously--only after presumption has been assigned on the basis of some other rationale is it found to coincidentally require a prima facie case. The educational value of this burden is assumed for the purposes of this analysis.

Presumption has also been defended as a decision rule in tie debates. Although the appeal of this argument has diminished of late, I fear that it has inadvertantly been overextended to do great harm to debate. The original definition of tie debates has been intuitively expanded by critics so that presumption as a decision rule has had the effect of perpetuating many of the abuses bemoaned by debate's critics. This will be argued at some length in a moment.

David Zarefsky has identified a fourth purpose for presumption--the introduction of rigor into the use of argument.[14] Given the probable/contingent nature of this method of proof, this is clearly the most useful purpose any concept of presumption should serve both in the real world and in enhancing the educational value of debate.

Presumption viewed as a decision rule in tie debates should be abandoned immediately. The two most apparent reasons are the dearth of ties as defined for this purpose and the absence of any compelling theoretical need to break these ties. Since it serves no purpose, even the smallest harm resulting from the use of

presumption as a decision rule compells us to reject such use.

My limited experience in intercollegiate debate has convinced me that the actual use of presumption by critics has been to justify balloting for the negative in all debates in which neither side has succeeded in creating belief. I can offer no convincing evidence to support this belief, but I contend that critics ballot negative "on presumption" in a host of situations which presumption has never been formally theorized to include. Completely "muddled" rounds in which the critic is unable to follow or comprehend either team's arguments, rounds between two inept teams, and rounds in which both teams have won some arguments without telling the critic how to evaluate their arguments all most frequently result in negative ballots because these debates are intuitively defined as tie debates.

Whether or not you accept the argument that negative teams are being rewarded when they abuse the "spread" by engaging in deliberate obfuscation, it is nevertheless apparent that presumption as a decision rule has no utility. Even if it is only used in actual ties it is unrealistic. If neither side has succeeded in creating belief it seems ludicrous to reward or punish either side. Any decision can only be arbitrary and unrelated to the relative quality of arguments. How can any such decision rule claim to be fair, pedagogically sound, or comparable to the real world? My final section will resolve the apparent paradox created by arguing that all assigned presumptions are unnecessary and counterproductive.

I am advocating here a new formulation of presumption grounded in the nature of argument itself, which also fulfills the educational and fairness functions of debate rules, and which serves all of the purposes traditionally delegated to presumption. The introduction of rigor into debate is the most important of these purposes, but the new formulation should also function to meet these other needs.

The concept of presumption I advocate is one which cannot be assigned--it is the naturally existing doubt or lack of <u>a priori</u> truth that necessitates the use of arguments in particular and the existence of the field of argument as a whole.

This presumption is the absence of belief and/or knowledge that urges advocates to initiate and continue arguments and that is overcome each time an auditor is brought to accept the rationality, validity, or probable truth of an argument. Presumption is that which inhibits belief and is the test which arguments must pass in order to create belief. It is the cognitive filter of uncertainty, of expertise and experience with arguments that I have operationalized as the critical stance. Presumption can be usefully equated with the uncertainty that Wayne Brockriede considers a necessary characteristic of all significant arguments.[15] Belief, in this rationalistic sense, is gained only by arguments capable of reducing the existing uncertainty to the point at which belief is not too risky.

This view holds that each argument presented influences the existing state of presumption regarding the ultimate claims of both sides. Presumption is in a state of dynamic flux until the cessation of advocacy, at which time one or neither of the parties will have overcome their presumption. The many criteria that various theorists have supported as relevant to the "weight" of presumption are all open to argument, and the presentation of arguments based on these criteria will doubtless alter the state of flux.[16]

Scholars have long recognized the probable/contingent nature of rhetorical proof, often by contrast with the tautology that the certain and true does not require proof nor admit of the need for argument. In debate, the acceptance of claims or "inferential leaps"[17] on either side of any resolution--regardless of the field--involves the same risk of uncertainty inherent to accepting any such non-deductive proof. This acceptance of the non-self-evident is belief--belief created by the effective selection and communication of arguments.

An evaluation of the educational value of this formulation must also look at the proposed critical stance. Since both approaches require us to accept and reward only good arguments, we are really being asked to use our expertise to motivate debaters to argue well. This combined approach should alleviate some of the competitive pressure to use abusive strategies by refusing to reward such use.

This conceptualization is also true to argument as a way of knowing because it functions so as to introduce rigor and quality control into the debate process.[18] Zarefsky attempts to introduce rigor through an assigned presumption that influences only the final decision we reach. The presumption itself ignores the components that lead to our decisions and attempts to apply a priori assumptions about the risks of accepting or rejecting resolutions rather than standards of quality which assure that the components of our decision are sufficiently rigorous. I argue that we must use a notion of presumption that has as its natural function the assurance of quality in each argumentative component prior to its acceptance as a relevant factor in the final decisions we reach.

This approach is fair in the game tradition. Both sides are given equal burdens to overcome, rather than one side being assigned a burden solely on the basis of their arbitrarily assigned position on a resolution. Thus, the resolution is only a burden to one side if arguments prove it to be a burden, not because we have made a determination in advance. Issues of risk and presumption arise solely from the nature of the controversy and the strategies used by opposing advocates--which is merely to say that they arise from the process of argument itself and from the abilities of the disputants to use arguments effectively.

Finally to the traditional roles of presumption. If we assume the absence of belief and equal burdens as our starting point it no longer matters who initiates a controversy so long as we require someone to do so. Broad policy propositions that call for change make an affirmative opening advantageous since an affirmative opening narrows the focus of the debate and facilitates direct clash. Other types of resolutions may justify a negative opening or make our choice immaterial.

If we agree that presumption defines the initiating party's burden to present a prima facie case before further debate is necessary, this reformulation does no harm. My conceptualization still requires a prima facie case from the initiator before response is required--it merely alters the rationale for this requirement.

Instead of serendipitously arriving at the requirement by the fortunate coincidence that the advocate of change is usually "affirmative" and usually the party motivated to initiate argument, this new concept is grounded in the nature of argument as a method of seeking truth and holds that whoever initiates a controversy has this burden regardless of the nature of the resolution. Whether one supports change or stability, the initiator must shoulder this burden.[19]

Since the rigor function has already been addressed we are down to the last purpose served by presumption--to act as a decision rule. If presumption is used to break ties, it will always be arbitrary in relation to our real decision criteria--the creation of belief through effective argumentation. Many theorists have already realized that no such decision rule is needed or justified. Zarefsky put it succinctly: "We might just as well draw lots or flip coins to determine which alternative to pursue [winner to select], because, argumentatively, it does not matter."[20] I think my final proposal offers a realistic solution to such a conceptual nightmare.

Decision Options

Like its predecessors, this section begins by assuming that belief is the end of argument and the best test of its quality. I will argue here that the practice of forcing critics to vote for one and against the other side is incompatible with the nature of real world argument. The difficulty is that debaters, like real world arguers, will frequently not manage to create belief in any ultimate claim.

When presumption is not overcome by either side in a debate it is truly a tie in the sense that both sides have failed to meet their equal burdens through effective argumentation. Such debates also resemble a tie in the sense that the normal basis for decision--the arguments themselves--cannot be used to determine the outcome. Since all tie-breaking decision rules are inherently arbitrary and

unrelated to argument itself, the current decision options ignore the belief criterion. We cannot enhance the educational values we espouse if we are forced to dole out rewards and punishments on other than argumentative grounds.

This expanded genre of tie debates is all too frequent in academic debate. Belief may be absent because our lack of data hinders the argumentative method, because the case area gives rise to too many complex issues to be resolved in one ninety minute debate, or because the judge is unable to follow the rapid delivery of the advocates or is intentionally misled and confused by the debaters. These situations all represent ties in relation to the belief criterion.

Despite the absence of any justified decision criteria for such cases, current tournament practices continue to mandate a yes-no decision. My contention is that most critics consistently award negative decisions in such tie debates. It is a minor distortion of existing notions of presumption which tells critics that in the absence of belief and the omnipresence of confusion and uncertainty the negative must win. It is possible to trace this practice to the high visibility of the risky resolution as a specifically and solely affirmative burden of proof--it begs us to rationalize our decisions with arguments referring to the greater risk of commitment associated with adopting the resolution. That such rationalizations tell us nothing about the relative quality of arguments on either side of the dispute is patent. The assumption of greater risk on one side is yet another invariable <u>a priori</u> application of a rule that ignores the variable nature of resolutions, audience options, and fields of inquiry.

In the all-or-nothing world of yes-no decisions there is an irresistible incentive for debaters to employ the "monster spread" anytime they are not sure that they can carry the ultimate disadvantage, the absolute plan meet advantage, or the "studies" counterplan. This unintentional inducement impairs educational debate because the efficacious response of competitors is to confuse opponents and critic alike and to prevent an accurate presentation and appraisal of

arguments. In conjunction with the urge to refute every argument presented, the affirmative team faces the improbable task of clarifying intentionally created chaos at a truly astounding rate of delivery previously attained only by top auctioneers and hopefuls seeking fame via the Brothers Guinness.

The absence of clear decision rules, stemming from theoretical inadequacies and the forced yes-no decision, has resulted in the overexpansion of negative territory. Since the affirmative must create truth or belief in order to overcome the assigned presumption in order to be rewarded, the negative is handed an unfair edge. While negative teams can also be rewarded for creating belief, they are also rewarded for outcomes in which no belief exists. When a debate ends with the critic utterly confused and unable to believe anything, the critic resides in "negative land." The a priori assumptions required to define this territory as legitimate negative ground by necessity ignore the situational nature of resolutions, the nature of the opposing claims, and the available audience options. While the ultimate claims of opposing advocates may allow only dichotomous decision options, we cannot make universal a priori assumptions that other possibilities don't exist.

Simply, then, my contention is that abuses of the "spread" strategy are all too often rewarded when negative teams are able to create sufficient confusion. Since tabula rasa thinking requires the affirmative to refute each argument, the affirmative has no choice but to play along with the "spread." Even if the negative elects not to attempt such abuse, the second affirmative speaker may still decide to spew out ten or twelve additive advantages which are spurious but too numerous to be refuted in the rebuttals. It is only by requiring each side to create some form of belief that we can use the available competitive rewards to prevent such abuses and to precipitate the use of quality argumentation in academic debate.

What I propose is quite simple--critics should not be required to make a decision in the absence of belief. Debate ballots should be modified to allow the critic the option of remaining undecided on the issues in controversy when that is

how s/he perceives the arguments.

My advocacy of the undecided option is based on my conclusion that it will reduce the incentives to deliberately abuse the "spread." By also doing away with tabula rasa assumptions, teams exposed to an abusive "spread" strategy would no longer feel the need to respond in kind since abusers would more likely be punished than rewarded. The undecided option reduces the potential rewards available to such abusers by making a winning ballot nearly unobtainable.

Outside of debate this idea is realistic. The auditors of real world debates quite often do not assent to either disputant's claim. To grant assent to either side on any of the issues "argued" in the Carter-Reagan debate would have required an act of faith external to the arguments presented. If both sides in any debate fail to overcome presumption, their audience, by definition, has remained undecided. Why then does academic debate continue to compel decisions that cannot be made on the basis of the arguments themselves?

I do not intend to present any proposals for the modification of competitive tournament practices. I will only argue that tournaments should adopt a reward structure commensurate with the idea that gaining belief should be rewarded, the absence of belief neither rewarded nor punished, and the gaining of belief by opponents punished. My reticence in proposing specific alternatives is the result of my preference for skeptics to evaluate my proposals solely on the theoretical grounds used to justify them. Although I have argued at length for the applicability of these proposals to academic debate, I ultimately support these concepts on their value to argumentation as a whole. I do not want the evaluation of the merits of my suggestions to be clouded by trivial "workability" arguments.

If my ideas are valid for argument outside of debate it would be irrational for us to reject them because they pose difficulties for tournament operation. It is far more reasonable to decide that debate practices must be changed to accomodate superior notions of argument itself. Zarefsky observed that "if we build models of

argument with academic debate as our point of reference, we invariably will be misguided. Rather, we should begin with questions more fundamental . . . if our answers and models are cogent enough, then academic debate will bend its format, procedures, and conventions to accomodate them. It always has."[21]

Lest critics accuse me of inadequate foresight, I feel compelled to discuss the possibility that this undecided option will be too frequently exercised. My first reason for dismissing this possibility is my willingness to rely on the expertise and integrity of critics in restricting the use of this option to those debates in which it becomes the only legitimate decision. There must be no confusion that this option is only to be used when the ultimate claims of both teams have not overcome the existing presumption. By signing an undecided ballot the judge is indicating that both teams have failed to a roughly equal extent.

The use of this option is further limited by the choice of ultimate claims argued by the disputants. If the negative chooses to claim that the affirmative has failed to prove its case, and if they succeed in theoretically justifying this claim as legitimate negative ground, the critic is left with only the traditional yes-no decision options.

Since the option of remaining undecided reduces the incentive to deliberately seek confusion and uncertainty as outcomes, this reformulation should increase the number of debates in which belief is actively sought and achieved. Remaining skeptics are reminded that overuse is not a disadvantage unique to this option. At the very worst the undecided ballots would replace many current negative ballots and would at least provide rewards closely related to the quality of arguments.

Supporters of the "spread" strategy as the most effective means of dealing with complex policy issues under the severe time constraints of academic debate should not label me as the enemy. When debaters use great numbers of quality arguments to seek belief I support the "spread." It is only when debaters use quantity at the expense of quality that I oppose this strategy. So long as debaters adapt to

critics' limitations, do not "spread" beyond their own speaking and reasoning abilities, and do not intentionally seek confusion rather than belief, the use of large quantities of arguments has great value. At least one purpose of my approach is to discourage those abuses of the "spread" strategy that prevent more universal recognition of its potential value in policy debate.

Concluding Remarks

As the title of this essay hinted, my primary goal was to evaluate debate in its manifestations as a game, an educational tool, and as a form of argument. The suggestions offered here are based primarily on debate as a form of argument. The arguments which support my conceptualizations in relation to debate as an educational game are secondary to my concern with debate as argument. I believe that we can make debate a fair and educational game only by first viewing and understanding the nature of argument itself.

I have chosen not to directly challenge the existing paradigms of academic debate. I believe they retain great utility as issues to be debated. The various paradigms come into conflict with my notions only when they are used by critics to justify the application of <u>a priori</u> rules or burdens. These paradigms are only detrimental as absolutes granted as truth prior to argument.

It is my hope that the ideas presented here will inspire criticism and further inquiry that will provide more certain solutions. I am very certain that current coneptualizations are erroneous. I am far less certain that I have found and offered the proper solutions. If I have not convinced you that my conceptualizations are correct, I hope that I have at least convinced you that current theories are erroneous and harmful enough that some solution is imperative.

Notes

[1] Charles Arthur Willard, "The Nature and Implications of the Policy Perspective for the Evaluation of Oral Argumentation," Unpublished Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Francisco California, December 28, 1976, p. 2.

[2] Willard, p. 2.

[3] Willard, pp. 2-3. A fairly typical advocacy of the strict rule-bound approach can be found in Fred Sanders, "Some Reflections on a 'General Theory of the Counterplan': or Let's Get Back to Sane Argument," Journal of the American Forensics Association, 13 (1977).

[4] A thorough critique of the various rule-bound approaches and their theoretical grounding is provided by Robert Trapp, "A Situationally-Guided Perspective for Propositions of Judgement," Unpublished Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, December 2, 1977.

[5] Willard, p. 6.

[6] Typical criticisms of the "spread" strategy are found in William Reynolds, "Theory and Practice in Forensics," in Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective, ed, James H. McBath (Skokie Ill: National Textbook, 1975) pp. 111-112.

[7] The neutrality of the critic toward the opposing advocates is supported by all writers who discuss the issue. The origin of this unanimous opinion is really a mystery to me. No writers feel the urge to justify this position with arguments.

[8] Richard M. Weaver, A Rhetoric and Handbook, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 134.

[9] Nearly all scholars in argumentation and persuasion have at some time lamented of the observed discrepancy between the cogency of arguments and the attitudinal/behavioral changes achieved by their use. The functional theory of attitudes comes from Daniel Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," Public Opinion Quarterly, 24, pp. 163-204.

[10] Willard, p. 6. For a somewhat similar view see Bill Balthrop, "Citizen, Legislator, and Bureaucrat as Evaluators of 'Competing Policy Systems,'" in Advanced Debate: Theory, Practice, and Teaching, ed. David Thomas, (Skokie, Illionois: National Textbook, 1979), pp. 402-418.

[11] Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric, (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 7.

[12] Richard Whately, Elements of Rhetoric, ed. Douglas Ehninger, (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), passim.

[13] The formulations referred to here come from a variety of sources. The assumptions that I accuse them of making can be found by a casual reading of the original works. See Gary Cronkhite, "The Locus of Presumption," Central States Speech Journal, November 1966, pp 270-276; David Zarefsky, "A Reformulation of the Concept of Presumption," Unpublished Paper presented at the Central States Speech Association Convention, Chicago, Illinois, April 6, 1972; and Allan J. Lichtman and Daniel M. Rohrer, "Policy Systems Debate: A Reaffirmation," Unpublished Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Antonio, Texas, November 1979, pp. 20-27.

[14] Zarefsky, p. 4.

[15] Donald K. Darnell and Wayne Brockriede, Persons Communicating, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 107.

[16] Lichtman and Rohrer, pp. 22-27.

[17] Darnell and Brockriede, pp. 101-104.

[18] The need for rigor is discussed in Zarefsky, pp. 3-4. The best discussion

of rhetorical "ways of knowing" is provided in Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," Central States Speech Journal, 18 (February 1967) pp. 9-17; and in Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," Central States Speech Journal, 27 (Winter 1976), pp. 258-266.

[19] Although the rationale are different, this is essentially the conclusion reached by Gary Cronkhite; see Cronkhite, pp. 275-276.

[20] Zarefsky, p. 6.

[21] David Zarefsky, "Policy Systems Debate: A Response to Lichtman and Rohrer," Unpublished Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Antonio, Texas, November 1979, p. 9.